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Governor Granholm Signs Budget Bills to Protect Michigan Citizens, Environment

LANSING – Governor Jennifer M. Granholm signed into law four budget bills for fiscal year 2004 aimed at protecting Michigan citizens and the environment. The budgets for the Departments of Agriculture, Corrections, Natural Resources and the Michigan Judiciary all reflect the recommendations the Governor made when she presented her balanced budget proposal in March.

Agriculture

The \$97.2 million budget, \$31.4 million of which is general fund, provides the necessary funding for food safety, environmental protection, animal and plant health programs and grants for operation of county and state fairs.

“Agriculture is one of the state’s largest industries and we are ranked number one nationally in the production of many agricultural products,” said Governor Granholm. “This budget continues our commitment to keeping agriculture as a driving force behind our economy as well as maintaining a safe, secure food supply for our families.”

Highlights of Senate Bill 288 include:

- \$7,250,000 in federal funding for an Emerald Ash Borer program for survey activities to assess the extent of damage to the state’s 28 million ash trees and to determine containment plan to prevent further spread of the infestation.
- A \$773,300 increase in the bovine tuberculosis program for total funding of \$4.2 million to monitor approximately 900 dairy and beef herds statewide.

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“In the year to come, this budget will allow us to make tremendous strides in protecting our families by containing and eradicating Emerald Ash Borer and fighting bovine tuberculosis in our state,” said Governor Granholm.

Corrections

The Department of Corrections will be funded with \$1.72 billion to protect public safety by imprisoning the state's worst felony offenders while providing cost effective community-based alternatives for lower risk offenders.

Funding of \$6 million is shifted from prison operations to fund the new Conditional Reintegration Program. This program, designed in collaboration with the Legislature and the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan, will house carefully screened low-risk inmates in corrections centers or on electronic tether in the community only after completion of their minimum sentence and with the approval by the chairman of the Parole Board. There will be no change to the Truth-In-Sentencing statute.

The budget creates two new community-based programs: the Felony Drunk Driver Jail Reduction & Community Treatment Program and the Local Facility Housing Program. These two programs will work in conjunction with the modified County Jail Reimbursement Program to provide additional options to house low-level felons locally.

This budget restores previous reductions made to community corrections programs to provide \$13.1 million for comprehensive plans and services grants and \$15 million for probation residential centers. These proven programs provide essential restorative justice funding to maintain local alternatives to incarceration in state prisons.

Judiciary

The \$253.6 million budget for the state Judiciary represents an increase of \$8.6 million over the current year appropriation while at the same time reducing the general fund portion of the appropriation by \$15.7 million.

“This budget, along with the related package of fee bills, will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our state’s court system as well as provide an improved

level of accountability,” said Governor Granholm. “I would like to express my appreciation to Chief Justice Maura Corrigan for her continued strong leadership in finalizing the budget and working with my administration and the Legislature to adopt a budget consistent with our

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mutual goals.”

Funding for drug treatment courts has been increased to \$4.6 million with the addition of \$1.3 million of State restricted revenues and \$1.8 million of federal revenues to expand the number of drug treatment courts operating in the State and to assist in avoiding prison bed space growth for nonviolent offenders. Governor Granholm made this a priority in her State of the State address by indicating that the state could save more than \$10,000 per person, per year in a drug treatment court program.

Citizens of Michigan who are called to jury duty will benefit from the addition of \$6.6 million to this budget to provide for an increase in the monetary reimbursement to jurors --unchanged since 1967 -- to more adequately compensate jurors for their time.

The Judicial Technology Improvement Fund is increased by \$2.4 million, to \$4.5 million. This will allow the Judiciary to continue to develop a statewide judicial network that will provide courts and the criminal justice system with quick, accurate, and accessible information and to pursue additional innovations such as e-filing and on-line payment of traffic tickets.

Natural Resources

The total budget for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is \$252.2 million; the general fund portion is \$28.8 million.

“Whether it is vacationing in one of the state’s beautiful parks, fishing in our pristine streams or riding your snowmobile across the U.P., Michigan’s rich natural heritage is second to none,” said Governor Granholm. “This budget will allow the state to maintain the level of stewardship and management we have come to expect from the Great Lakes State.”

Highlights included in the 2004 DNR budget include:

- \$18.0 million in support for the payment in lieu of taxes program.
- Replacement of General Fund support of the State Parks with \$6.0 million

in Park Endowment Funds and \$2.5 million for increased motor vehicle entry permits.

- An additional \$4.0 million in federal support to assist in Emerald Ash Borer reforestation efforts.

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- An additional \$1.0 million in Snowmobile Trail Improvement Funds for local snowmobile grants.

The Governor vetoed three items in the DNR budget. They include a \$22,100 grant to complete the Big Rapids river walk project, which is already funded in Senate Bill 540 (FY '03 supplemental); funding for a Sebewaing Harbor Commission Flood Control Grant; and \$20,000 for the Bennett Arboretum.

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